

Stephen “Steve” L. Johnson

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Jackson Turner

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Stephen Johnson

Transcript – Stephen Johnson

Interviewee: Stephen “Steve” L. Johnson

Interviewer: John Ansley

Interview Date: November 28th, 2018

Location: Marist Archives and Special Collections

Topic: Marist College History

Subject Headings: Johnson, Stephen “Steve” L.
Marist College

Marist College-social aspects and brotherhood

UFO sighting over the Hudson

Summary: Steve Johnson reminisces and talks about his life on campus in the 60’s, and how different it was to Marist today. He also talks about his UFO sighting over the Hudson river, and the Marist Brothers former involvement in the school.

John Ansley (00:00:03):

This is John Ansley, director of the archives and special collections on the morning of November 28th. I'm here with Steve Johnson, who is doing an interview for the Marist heritage project. So morning, Steve.

Stephen Johnson (00:00:16):

Good morning, John. Thank you for having me up.

John Ansley (00:00:18):

Thanks so much for coming. I appreciate your taking time.

Stephen Johnson (00:00:20):

Delighted to be here.

John Ansley (00:00:22):

So to get started, I'll ask you a couple of general questions. Would you please give me your full name and your, your award?

Stephen Johnson (00:00:30):

I'm Steven L. Johnson. I was born in 1947.

John Ansley (00:00:35):

Great, thank you. And where were you born?

Stephen Johnson (00:00:37):

I was born in Boston, Massachusetts.

John Ansley (00:00:39):

Boston, what brought you down to the New York area?

Stephen Johnson (00:00:43):

Came down to the New York area because my father was transferred here, grew up largely between Boston and Providence, Rhode Island. Started high school in Warwick, Rhode Island, Bishop Hendrickson, which was a Dominican Brother school in October of 1963. My dad was transferred to Newburgh, New York with the Sun Oil Company. In Newburgh, New York, I was duly enrolled in St. Patrick's high school run by the French Christian Brothers. I went from extremely large high school, over 900 guys to a high school in Newburgh with four rooms, 25 guys in each. That was a hundred guys. Wow. That was the school.

John Ansley (00:01:25):

And for your elementary school education was that also Christian brothers?

Stephen Johnson (00:01:35):

Now is oddly enough, Ladies of Mercy, the Lady of Mercy order in Rhode Island. I had most of my time with them. I had one year in the public school system in Rhode Island, junior high school, middle school today, junior high school, and then on, into, the regular high school, but, primarily, Ladies of Mercy, Ladies of Mercy, the Lady of Mercy order in East Greenwich, Rhode Island.

John Ansley (00:02:04):

East Greenwich? Yeah. Okay. And what was your dad's name and what was his occupation?

Stephen Johnson (00:02:11):

And my father was Elmer Johnson. He was the district sales manager for the sun oil company out of Newburgh New York.

John Ansley (00:02:19):

Great, and what was your mother's name and occupation?

Stephen Johnson (00:02:23):

My mother was Patricia McGlone Johnson. She was born in st. John, New Brunswick, and she was a homemaker.

John Ansley (00:02:29):

Okay, great. She did. Sorry.

Stephen Johnson (00:02:29):

Problem, she kept all of us on a short leash.

John Ansley (00:02:36):

Did you do you have any siblings?

Stephen Johnson (00:02:39):

I have a sister in Philadelphia and her brother is still in Rhode Island.

John Ansley (00:02:43):

Okay, great. And where do you fall, in this?

Stephen Johnson (00:02:46):

I'm, I'm the oldest of the pack.

John Ansley (00:02:48):

You're the oldest.

Stephen Johnson (00:02:49):

My sister's in the middle of my brothers, the, the junior member.

John Ansley (00:02:53):

So the bird waffle.

Stephen Johnson (00:02:55):

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

John Ansley (00:03:02):

So tell me a little bit about your growing up in the Boston area.

Stephen Johnson (00:03:10):

Oh, it was good fun. Yeah. I mean, it was growing up in the early fifties, mid fifties, the fifties, and then into the early sixties. And I have great memories of it from Nita, Massachusetts to East Greenwich, Rhode Island. It was what I call the pre interstate era when we traveled back and forth between Rhode Island and Massachusetts for my father to visit his parents in the Newton Massachusetts area, it was on us route one and it took forever to get there. So it was pre interstate. It was great fun. I can remember the schools I was in, which was a number of schools because my dad was transferred on a semi regular basis. And I remember moving and always being the new boy in school. I got to be a practice art and being the new boy in school. So I saw a lot of schools in a fairly tight geographic area and then landing in East Greenwich, Rhode Island and spending most of the growing up time there. But I can remember things like, particularly in Massachusetts on Sundays, the blue laws, nothing was open. You could tell where the weekend and where the week began. So I had a great time. I remember the music. I remember the friends, it was a great time to grow up.

John Ansley (00:04:34):

Any, any challenges with being the new kid when you're going into schools?

Stephen Johnson (00:04:37):

Oh yeah. Always, always, you know, who's the new kid you had to prove yourself. You had to duck a lot. You had to learn a diplomatic skills fairly quickly. And I never liked it, but I did it enough to become reasonably good at it. And it was one of the great delights and coming to mirrors. Cause I knew when I landed here, I was the new kid along and everybody else. Right. Wish I had to be nice. That was great.

John Ansley (00:05:03):

Do you think that worked to your advantage later on?

Stephen Johnson (00:05:06):

I believe it did. Yeah. I believe it did because it gave me skills for adaptability diplomacy being able to read a room, coming to make some quick decisions about events around me. So it has served me well. Okay, good. I wouldn't trade it.

John Ansley (00:05:26):

Yeah. It sounds like you had some good school experiences.

Stephen Johnson (00:05:30):

I did. I did. I, I can't complain. I wasn't the world's greatest student, but I had a very good experience in, in all the schools I attended.

John Ansley (00:05:39):

And tell me again, what was the name of the high school you went to when you were in Newburgh?

John Ansley (00:05:43):

Newburgh in Newburgh was St. Patrick high school, 49 grand street. The building still stands today. The building was originally constructed in the very latter part of the 19th century. You're going to love this: by the wheel men of Newburgh. They were the guys who rode the bicycles with the enormous front tire and the little back tire. It was their clubhouse.

John Ansley (00:06:09):

Really?

Stephen Johnson (00:06:10):

Yeah.

John Ansley (00:06:10):

Yeah. Wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:06:11):

And the Christian brothers, French Christian brothers took it over and opened it as St. Patrick high school in 1949. It subsequently closed in 1969. I was the class of 1965, but as I said, there were four classrooms, basically 25 guys in each. And they just simply moved through the three classrooms, which were on the ground floor. Our cafeteria was in the basement and the senior room was on the second floor. And then your fourth year, you literally walked upstairs in your classroom.

John Ansley (00:06:50):

You ascended.

Stephen Johnson (00:06:51):

And that was it. And away you went. It was, it was a lot of fun. There were, there were no real sports teams. The high school used the gym next door of the grammar school for the basketball team. There was a golf team and there was a bowling league. And I was on the bowling league because there was a, in those days in Newburgh on Broadway, there was a very large bowling alley, just up the block from us. So that was an easy fit, as I remember bowling from being a kid back in Rhode Island. So I bowled didn't play golf. Definitely didn't play basketball, but played music. That's when the Beatles broke, I entered there in October of 63, the Beatles premiered on Sullivan and in February of 64. And I had a guitar in my hand from that point on.

John Ansley (00:07:44):

Yeah, oh, that's a lot of fun. Did you have an opportunity to play for school?

Stephen Johnson (00:07:47):

Yeah. We played a lot. Yeah. We put together a number of bands, but then again, every kid in Newburgh was in a band in those days. And so you, you play anywhere. Pizza parlors restaurants, street corners,

you just played. So it was a great deal of fun. So my extracurricular activity in those days was absolutely music.

John Ansley (00:08:07):

Oh, that must have been a lot of fun.

Stephen Johnson (00:08:09):

It was a ton of fun.

John Ansley (00:08:10):

Did you make a lot of friends that way?

Stephen Johnson (00:08:12):

Yeah. Yeah. Got to know a lot of guys, and got to learn, you know, a lot about working in front of people cause you were playing and we, to say, we weren't terribly good. It was an understatement, but we were terribly loud and that's what all that was called for in those days. So yeah, we played, we played with a lot of different people in a couple of different bands until, during my senior year, my father said, no, you got to graduate. You got to move on out of that. So my musical career halfway through my senior year was terminated and, music was done a favor.

John Ansley (00:08:55):

Yeah. Did you have what were your favorite subjects in high school?

Stephen Johnson (00:08:59):

Oh, well history first and foremost.

John Ansley (00:09:01):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:09:02):

I enjoy that a lot literature, quite a lot. Science I enjoyed, but I didn't have any real skill for it. Mathematics terrified me, and French and Latin I limped through because as you'll recall, being in New York state school, we were subject to the regions.

John Ansley (00:09:23):

Right.

Stephen Johnson (00:09:23):

And they were just a thrill to take. And, and the physics Regents, it was great. Actually, it was the chemistry Regents in 64 when Barry Goldwater was running for office the regions had a question and one of the answers was the AU H₂O, which was gold water, but it wasn't the correct answer, but it was one of the the multiple guests answers for one of the questions they had posed. But the regions was a fact we had to deal with in New York state. But I certainly enjoyed getting through it. History I liked the

lot, mathematics I tolerated and the languages I limped through, but I got enough to get out. And that's what counted.

John Ansley (00:10:09):

Did you have any memorable teachers in your high school?

Stephen Johnson (00:10:15):

Ah, yeah. Yeah, probably. Brother Luke who taught us English and English grammar. He was really interesting. Brother Henry taught us science and he made it as interesting as possible. And the school principal was an absolute character brother, Leonard who's I think legends still looms large in Newburgh today. So they, they really could work their audience well, they knew they had to maintain an interest level in all of us, 25 guys sitting in these rooms and engage us and they did. And so there's really not a dull moment. We didn't have a lot of downtime because there was nothing else to do, but study. So they made it as lively, an environment as possible.

John Ansley (00:11:04):

Oh, that's great. That must have been,

Stephen Johnson (00:11:05):

So we stuck to our books.

John Ansley (00:11:07):

Yeah. That must have made a big difference.

Stephen Johnson (00:11:09):

I think I should. Yeah, I think it did because it gave me a subsequent discipline that I carried over into collegiate life and then subsequently ended up business life has served me well, for lack of a better term.

John Ansley (00:11:25):

When so when did you graduate from high school?

Stephen Johnson (00:11:27):

Graduated in 1965. June of 65.

John Ansley (00:11:31):

So when and why did you decide to attend Marist?

Stephen Johnson (00:11:36):

I decided to attend Marist because it was one of the few campuses that I actually got on to and looked at, interviewed with a director of admissions in those days, so Tom Wade.

John Ansley (00:11:48):

Oh yeah. I know Tom.

Stephen Johnson (00:11:49):

And Tom asked me a crucial question, which was, would you like to go here? Yes, please. I said, and that was my big entree.

John Ansley (00:11:58):

Oh, that's great.

Stephen Johnson (00:11:59):

What also helped is we had six or five or six other guys from my class came up here as well.

John Ansley (00:12:06):

Oh, very nice.

Stephen Johnson (00:12:06):

So we had a group of guys that actually came on up here. Jimmy Walsh, Bob Hatfield Charlie Anzalone was in there. Kevin McArdle so there was a core of guys who came up and that, that absolutely helped a lot, but I liked the look of the campus. I had toured it with my parents and February or March of 65, asked for an interview was invited in and the interviewer of course, was Tom Wade.

John Ansley (00:12:37):

That's great.

Stephen Johnson (00:12:37):

Then Tom was very pleasant, very cordial. And when he asked the magic question, I said, yes, please. And that's how I came here.

John Ansley (00:12:45):

Yeah. So it sounds like the interview process is a little bit different than what today's students go through. Would you mind describing that? Cause I think that would be interesting to,

Stephen Johnson (00:13:00):

Sure.

John Ansley (00:13:00):

Students to learn about that.

Stephen Johnson (00:13:01):

Yeah. The interview process in those days, because the school was both number one, pretty darn small, then two, all male. I suspect the interview process for this school was one in which admissions literally wanted to get a face to face assessment of a candidate and understand what their interests were, potential strengths possible weaknesses and how they would interact on campus as opposed to the weight of SATs or ACTs and, high school advanced placement classes. It struck me that the interview process here was looking at the individual from the individual's point of view, which is, you know, I know the following, I bring the following. I remember being asked what had I read recently? And while I was

literally in the middle of reading, one of Churchill's histories of world war II, and I just remembered that fortuitously and shared that with Tom. And we talked about high school life in general and where I had been, cause I told them I had gone through two high schools. So it was just a, more of a get to know you interview and an assessment on the part of the college, which is, would this individual in 1965 be a good fit in the class. So it did not bring an artificiality to the process you came as you were with the good and or the bad, and somebody who was prepared to look at a candidate in that light, as opposed to a candidate being looked in the light of all the surround, which exists today, which is a great deal of useful and perhaps not so useful baggage coming from a high school and academic achievement and literally putting a resume down today. Students are coached literally on a resume as well as, you know, the important, theme, the paragraph, the composition you're writing for the college. You know, I don't recall being subject to that. It was literally a very knowledgeable, very personable gentlemen saying, tell me about yourself. And I thought, well, that's my, that's my forte. That's my strength. And I'll go with that.

John Ansley (00:15:39):

Yeah. That's very interesting because yeah, I remember when I went through the process, you know, decades ago, it was just the way you said it was very impersonal process.

Stephen Johnson (00:15:52):

Yeah.

John Ansley (00:15:52):

So, you know, it was complete the form, write the essay and send it in. I didn't talk to anybody. So yeah, I toured the campus and that was, that was about it, you know? So it was a group kind of meeting, you know, if you can even call it that, but to have that one on one interview I would imagine made an impression.

Stephen Johnson (00:16:12):

It made a great impression even today. When I see Tom, I still thank him, you know, for being the, the, the good gentleman that he was and offering a lot of guys this chance to get to what has become one superb institution. And without Tom, I don't think I'd be sitting here today.

John Ansley (00:16:35):

That's great. Was it important that it was a Catholic Catholic college at the time?

Stephen Johnson (00:16:41):

I think to my parents, to me, it made little difference.

John Ansley (00:16:45):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:16:45):

It, it provided a continuity that I was used to from a Catholic grammar school to Catholic high school. So I knew intuitively it would provide a continuity, but it was not critical to me. The critical to me was I'd like to get into a college that I would like to get into as opposed to being shunted into one. So this met in my very limited thinking, the criteria that I thought, well, this is great. I happen to like the Hudson

Valley. I had never seen it growing up in Rhode Island when I saw it and lived in it every day in Newburgh. I said, boy, this is really special place coming up here for the first time and touring the campus. I said, well, this is equally special. And it, it fitted my view of a campus. You know, the building, you know, champagnat and Sheahan and Leo were brand new. Donnelly, not quite so new, but I think the paint was still drying on it. So it it coalesced in my mind as a potentially great place to be.

John Ansley (00:17:49):

Right. so what do you mention a few of the buildings on campus? Can you give me a, you know, a description of what it was like? About what it looked like back in '65?

Stephen Johnson (00:18:00):

Oh, absolutely. It's a terrific question. The first building I was ever in on campus was Donnelly because that is where in February or March of 65, the tour began. Donnelly in those days incorporated the cafeteria, which was below the main floor in Donnelly. When you'd walked into Donnelly, instead of going up, you go down the stairs. That was the cafeteria. I think there's a technology, or at least once upon a time there was a technology center there. Their cafeteria was there, the dorms presumably before she and Leo were built, but there were dorms in there that subsequent became professor's offices. The bookstore was in there, the library was there and two phone booths and the central teaching theaters were there. So Donnelly was effectively a self contained unit for a small college group, presumably secular, because in my dim recollection, the, the brothers and the student brothers lived in what I recall being Fontaine hall, which would have sat where we are sitting now in Cannavino. And I looked at Donnelly, and I said, "Oh, this is pretty neat. Everything's under one roof." We were shown the classrooms, which in some cases you could literally walk through the window and into the classroom. I don't think that's possible today, but Donnelly was self contained. And then the tour continued. I saw graystone. Taken in to see that the gym was there, Marian today, but it was the gym then. And Sheahan was already in place as was Leo. I dimly remember Champagnat known today as the student center and the Murray center, of course, being under construction when I was first a visitor on campus. And I have fond memories of Leo because I was placed on the second floor for my first year, in September of 1965. Sheahan I, I never bunked in, but Leo, I was in for my first and second years, the second half of my second year, I then went across campus into Champagnat. It was available, I was able to get a room in there. And I liked that a lot because it was just downstairs at the cafeteria. Yeah. And not only the cafeteria, but we had a Rathskeller, which no longer exists today.

John Ansley (00:20:41):

Oh yeah. Rathskeller was there. I remember when it opened Monday night beers were 10 cents.

John Ansley (00:20:46):

What was the drinking age?

Stephen Johnson (00:20:47):

18.

John Ansley (00:20:48):

18.

Stephen Johnson (00:20:49):

Yeah.

John Ansley (00:20:49):

So that was an important social spot on campus.

Stephen Johnson (00:20:51):

Oh yeah. Yeah. And the mixers in those days on Friday night there would always be loud music and women would be brought in by bus from lady cliff down near West point or Mount St. Mary in Newburgh, or I don't know elsewhere, but the local colleges. Yeah. They came in by busses and the cafeteria tables were set aside and the dances were in the dining hall, but yeah, the dining hall of Champangnet.

John Ansley (00:21:24):

So did professors or any of the you know, faculty, staff join students in the Rathskeller? Was that purely a student hangout?

Stephen Johnson (00:21:33):

I have no recollection or memory of a professor or staff in the Rathskeller.

John Ansley (00:21:38):

Yeah. Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:21:40):

Perhaps because it did not open until seven or eight at night.

John Ansley (00:21:47):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:21:47):

It was not as I recall open during the day.

John Ansley (00:21:50):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:21:50):

It may have been later on, but in my first and second years, I recall only being open on a, well initially on Monday night, not the weekend, but definitely after hours seven or eight o'clock.

John Ansley (00:22:07):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:22:07):

It was nice. I mean, you could get a hot dog, a hamburger, you could get a beer. The beer was always flat.

John Ansley (00:22:12):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:22:14):

Jeez. On what you had to pay extra to get bubbles.

John Ansley (00:22:18):

But it was still as I'm sure you still had a great time.

Stephen Johnson (00:22:20):

It was a lot of fun. Yeah. I can remember in our first yeah, first year we had towards the end of the year, the Beau Brummels, who were a big deal in 64, they were a band out of San Francisco. They played here and then they went down to the rathskeller between sets. And I remember going down and talk until the times played on campus. And I think my second year, so 65 and then 66 times were a great of R and B and acapella group. And I remember very distinctly sitting down at the Rathskeller and just talking to these guys.

John Ansley (00:22:59):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:22:59):

It was a lot of fun it, it had a jukebox down there.

John Ansley (00:23:01):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:23:02):

So the jukebox was always on, that's the first jukebox I ever heard the bands for song, the weight played on first commercial song played on that. Jukebox also heard a lot of Sinatra on that jukebox. So the Rathskeller was a, just a really great hangout because if you're going to be on campus, it was an easy March to get there. It's a lot of fun.

John Ansley (00:23:25):

Oh, that sounds great. Yeah. I don't think that today's students would be jealous.

Stephen Johnson (00:23:30):

Well,

John Ansley (00:23:32):

I know that was what it was like back in '65,

Stephen Johnson (00:23:35):

It was it was a little Hernando's hideaway to steal a line from the pajama game.

John Ansley (00:23:43):

Oh, I meant to ask you what was in Greystone when you first got here?

Stephen Johnson (00:23:49):

Uh the only thing I remember in Greystone was literally the admissions office. I remember entering it from, you know, this ground level opposite what is Cannavino today. Somebody told me the basement was used for storage. I was intrigued because it had a you know, a castelletto roof to it. And the rough hewn stone. You could imagine that you were in Wales or somewhere in Ireland looking at an old castle, but I can only remember the admissions office being in it. I don't think in my subsequent years, I even paid a visit to Greystone between arrival and graduation.

John Ansley (00:24:31):

Yeah. No. And that's, I think typical is, you know, you may have had that one interview with Tom Weyden and no, you wouldn't need to, after that

Stephen Johnson (00:24:43):

It worked it's magic, but to me it was always the central building on campus. It was that one fixed point, which in my mind, the campus tended to revolve around. Okay. Because a chapel to the North and to the West academic campus, to the South and to the East, Donnelly in front of it. So in a sense, it was kind of in the middle of everything. So I was always always intrigued by it. It was always a good point of navigation across campus. I got pictures of it in snowstorms,

John Ansley (00:25:18):

Oh, it must be beautiful.

Stephen Johnson (00:25:20):

Cause we used to have some serious snow storms. Yeah.

John Ansley (00:25:25):

How did campus handle snow storms? We just had a snow day about a week ago. So all classes were canceled.

Stephen Johnson (00:25:34):

Well, the way to answer that is to remember in those days, in my case, 65 to 69 parking went right up to and in front of Sheahan, Leo and primarily Champagnet. And the gym, those people who were parked there remained parked there until the snow melted. There was precious little plowing. The plowing I dimly recall was what is mid-rise today had been a parking lot. There was some plowing done in there. The trick was the plow had to get down the Hill to get into that place. The plow Donnelly got plowed out because the majority of the staff were there, but that was about it. I have clear memories of coming back on the campus after breaks in after first year, second year. And I think fourth year where the storms hit and schools called off and I've got pictures that I took for my room in Champagnet 704 in my last year. And looking down into the campus in the direction of Donnelly and present day Marian was like looking at vanilla frosting of a cake with raisins in it, which was all the cars that were stuck in the snow. It was a lot different. There was a lot less attention paid because the primary, the primary community of students was on campus. They weren't going to drive anywhere. And the majority of

professors, if it was a day off, weren't going to come in. The neatest event was November of 1965, the great blackout. The night the lights went out, I was walking across campus from Donnelly back to Leo and the Hudson Valley went out.

John Ansley (00:27:33):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:27:33):

Pitch black, dead quiet. And that was some night. Everybody has got stories about that night.

John Ansley (00:27:43):

What was campus like?

Stephen Johnson (00:27:44):

Campus was very strange because as a, as a first year, you had to be in your room at your desk at eight o'clock because the dorm Proctor, I guess that's the RA today would do a room check to make sure the first years were where they were supposed to be. Well, we couldn't go back because there were no lights. And so suddenly you know, anarchy reigns supreme. The old joke was where did you go to school? Well, I went to school across from Frank's bar, Frank's bar across the street on nine, also lost power. And I was not in it. I was studying, at least I was trying to study. And they supposedly weren't letting guys out and oddly enough, not letting guys in, but that night on campus was amazing. It went off, I think about 7:45. It didn't come back on until well, after 10 o'clock and it was spectacular. I mean, it was pitch black cars were moving, but there was no traffic lights, no navigation, no background lighting. It was absolutely plunged into pitch black. And then rumors started flying. People had, you know, transistor radios and you know, New York is saying the power is out and what's going on. You know, you know, we being invaded. It was spectacular. Wow. It's a great night. Good thing. I didn't happen in the snow. I mean, at least it was a tolerable night.

John Ansley (00:29:18):

Yeah. Yeah. That's true.

Stephen Johnson (00:29:22):

I've often wondered. There used to be a diner across the street on nine. It was called the College Diner. It doesn't physically exist. It was a very small place, but guys would go there to eat. And there were guys who didn't pay to check and bolted. And I often wondered on that night, guys, didn't just get up and leave.

John Ansley (00:29:44):

There's probably a lot of that.

New Speaker (00:29:46):

I mean, there was one, there was once a story about a couple of guys who ran out and the owner says the remaining three guys, a free meal to anyone who catches those two guys. So the other three guys got up and bolted too.

John Ansley (00:30:00):

Dine and dash.

Stephen Johnson (00:30:02):

Dine and dash very nicely put.

John Ansley (00:30:03):

Oh, that's interesting. It's the first time I've heard about the blackout on campus.

Stephen Johnson (00:30:07):

Yeah, the blackout was, it was an extraordinary event. It was not terribly well covered. I wish I had a copy of the circle magazine from those days. Cause I presume somebody wrote something about it.

John Ansley (00:30:22):

We'll have to look.

Stephen Johnson (00:30:23):

I wonder if they did not because it was an absolute one-off. There was nothing like it to my knowledge before. And I was only there eight weeks at that point.

John Ansley (00:30:33):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:30:33):

I never saw it happen again, but it was a indelibly impressive event. When the lights went off, we were, we were in the dark.

John Ansley (00:30:47):

I imagined that was something unique.

Stephen Johnson (00:30:53):

That was the only night that I didn't have to do study hall.

John Ansley (00:31:00):

So let's see. So you had the dorms you mentioned and you were in Champagnat as an upper.

Stephen Johnson (00:31:14):

Yeah, by my second half of my second year, I moved into Champagnat.

John Ansley (00:31:17):

So on the, so that's more in the Southern part of campus. And so I'm trying to get that picture of what it was like in 65, mid sixties compared to today. So on the Northern part of campus. So North campus

basically, you know, you had, you know, I guess like the gatehouse and St .Peter's would be considered North campus in those days.

Stephen Johnson (00:31:38):

That was, that was a Terra Incognitus. The only destination we had up there was the swimming pool. Okay. That sits where Lowell Thomas is today.

John Ansley (00:31:53):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:31:54):

It sat at the bottom of a glen around it and adjacent to what were two things in my memory of sort of abandoned farm outbuildings. I can remember a chicken coop and there was something of a tennis, not a tennis court, but a tennis back wall where you could go up and, you know, bounce tennis balls against it like a half court. And it was, it was outside. The only active area that I can recall even through my fourth year was the pool. And I was only in the pool once. And that was at the end of my first week as a first year student, when hazing was over, because hazing was allowed in those days. You know, people arrived, they weren't snowflakes. They could actually endure hazing. Was it fair? No, it didn't kill you. So it made you grow up a little bit.

John Ansley (00:32:53):

So what was hazing like?

Stephen Johnson (00:32:55):

Hazing, Well, hazing was a pain in the neck cause you had to carry around a big, I'm motioning, but that's about 36 by 24 Oak sign with your name and people would write stuff on it. You had to wear a beanie. I know there's one in the library. You had to carry a rock that you named. And if the rock broke, you had to bury it. It was all inane stuff. The second years were the hazers and we were the hazees. Your big brother was assigned to you from a senior year student who could ostensibly I suppose, run interference for some kid being hazed. Well, it was a nuisance because you were trying to learn campus. You were trying to get the classes and the hazing was relentless until you got into a building. Once you were into Donnelley, or once you were back in your dorm, you couldn't be hazed. But the trip in between you were fair game at the end of the week, the class had the battle. So class of 69 had the battle with the class of 68 who were at that point second years, we went over to the pool. We had everything from tires, the shaving cream, they were on one side of the slope. They being the sophomores, we, the freshmen were on the other side of the slope and we just started the battle, which was shaving cream, eggs. I forgot what the tire tubes did, but the tire tubes are part of it. There was a lot of whipped cream and in the end, everybody wound up in the pool and the pool turned colors from purple to magenta, to yellow. I don't know how this stuff was ever cleaned up, but that was my big memory of the North end of campus, because the chapel was sort of the Northern boundary and St Peter's was the absolute end of the campus, right? You couldn't, there was nowhere to park. I was dimly aware in our last year that the apartments began construction. I think it may have been Gartland yeah, they began construction and Hancock sits on where they were, but they were, and I don't think I'm wrong as they were the first new residential structures on campus to house kids. Cause prior to that was, you know, champagnat, Leo, Sheahan. These were the new garden apartments. They were, they were at the height of great living.

John Ansley (00:35:34):

Yeah. There was nothing out there we were aware, I don't know how we knew about we, we learned that that had been the site, some portion of it, of an amusement park.

John Ansley (00:35:45):

Right. Woodcliff.

Stephen Johnson (00:35:48):

Was that Woodcliff?

John Ansley (00:35:49):

Woodcliff Pleasure Park. Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:35:50):

That's where it was. What we knew existed in those days with the remains of the swimming pool, which was down below the banks of the river adjacent to the railway tracks. So you had the Hudson River, the railway tracks, and then immediately what had been this pool and then presumably the rest of the amusement park cascaded down that hill.

John Ansley (00:36:15):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:36:16):

In our time it was woods. There may have been some derelict buildings. The only thing I remember was the remains of the pool.

John Ansley (00:36:23):

Oh, that's interesting. Yeah. I guess that's, you know, while I'm gone, I think there's a tiny portion of a foundation you can see in Fern tour now.

Stephen Johnson (00:36:32):

Oh is that right? It'd be nice if, in fact they were able to maintain it. I don't know how we stumbled on it, but just, you know, you could roam around in those days and we would get down to the river and walk up and down the tracks. Cause it was fairly interesting, I suppose that's how we found this Old Pool. Yeah. But that North end of campus was just completely off the radar. You know, we were too busy in the buildings that we were in or scurrying off campus to get onto the Derby or something Go up there with luck.

John Ansley (00:37:04):

That's funny. That must have been, I could see that being attractive, you know, in between downtime between class and studying.

Stephen Johnson (00:37:11):

Yeah. You go, you go exploring, you know, get your bearings around here. And I don't think I did a lot of exploring in my fourth year, but certainly my first and second year I was looking around the campus. Cause there were structures no longer existed. There had been a footbridge behind Champagnat yet that went up and over the railway tracks that had originally been built by the New York central railroad so that people could get access from what was ever the predecessor to the Marist property down to the boat, boathouses and I'm thinking specifically of the Marist house as well as the Cornell house.

John Ansley (00:37:53):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:37:53):

And I remember the crews being out there. I was not on the crew team, but the guys who were on crew coach Arnold made them run those steps every morning. And they were about as close to vertical as you could get. And the bridge was probably like something out of Thornton Wilder. There's the bridge of San Louis Ray. I mean it's long gone now and was a good reason for it. It was structurally unsafe, but it was how people crossed over from the campus down to the riverfront.

John Ansley (00:38:24):

Yeah. That's interesting. Cause yeah. It's I wonder when that was taken down, cause that must have been, some time ago.

Stephen Johnson (00:38:30):

Yeah, it was, it was there in my last year, but it was it and it has been gone for many years, but I have no recollection of when that was pulled down, but it was a great eyesore and remains of those still exist. The railroad did build bridges. There was actually one from this amusement park and I believe I came across a photograph of it. And then subsequently looking for where the foundations might have been. But the railroad was a well, hardly obliging. It was a moneymaking proposition, but they had to allow people access to the river. So, you know, they did this in different places.

John Ansley (00:39:12):

Oh, interesting. Yeah. That must have been the way people got from the Dayliner on the river to the amusement park.

Stephen Johnson (00:39:19):

That would make sense. That would absolutely make sense.

John Ansley (00:39:22):

Interesting. Yeah. So just a follow up question to hazing. So it was a hazing week?

Stephen Johnson (00:39:28):

Oh yeah.

John Ansley (00:39:30):

And this was totally sanctioned by the college?

Stephen Johnson (00:39:32):

Oh yeah. Yeah. So you were told you would be hazed. I remember arriving on a Saturday. We arrived after labor day, which is how college should be. But we arrived after labor day. I think it was a Saturday. The, the class was brought into Champagnat. It Must've around running. At least the cafeteria was cause we were brought in there. We sat as families. I remember lining up to get fed and then we were all given information packets. And then your parents were told to go home. I mean, that was it. I mean, obviously pre-internet, pre iPhone. You were just simply on your own and in the packet contained your beanie had the year on it, 69 red beanie with the Fox of course. And you were told there would be hazing. None of us particularly knew what it was. But when you walked out of the dorm Monday morning, you found out what it was. I think we were told in the packet that you had to have your name tag on. So they provided these large white sheets of semi rigid paper. You had to have on the beanie and you had to carry the rock and then you had to make your way across campus.

John Ansley (00:40:55):

What sort of things did the upperclassmen do to the freshmen?

Stephen Johnson (00:41:00):

Oh, you'd have to do things like there were, there were college questions, you know, when was the college opened? You know, how many students are here, what's the president's name of the college? Or, you know, they'd ask you to recite the alphabet backwards. I mean, it was still inane crazy stuff. It was just as crazy for them, but they weren't under the same duress as a bunch of first years were so it was, it was just lunacy as I recall like after five o'clock you couldn't get hazed.

John Ansley (00:41:34):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:41:35):

But going back and forth, you could be. And then when you were out, you were just fair game, no matter what you were doing. So you were happy. If you could catch some time to do whatever work you had to do and not be hazed. But in retrospect it was fun. Knowing no one got hurt, but you were, you really diverted badly from what you wanted to be doing and you, you mentally adjusted it's okay. You know, it would normally take me five minutes to get across campus. It's probably gonna take me 35 minutes. Cause if one group pays you and they let you go, well, then the next group of grabbing, you might be hazed by one group going across campus. You might be hazed by seven groups going across campus, but it only lasted five days.

John Ansley (00:42:27):

Okay. I guess that's, that's good. It is interesting because you see it in yearbooks, you know, it's very prominent. So it's something that I like to point out to our undergraduates now because you know, they, they have very different if they're aware of hazing at all, they think of it as something that's in a very niche.

Stephen Johnson (00:42:50):

They would have a very, very hard time with it.

John Ansley (00:42:52):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:42:55):

I could be hugely politically incorrect here, but I won't, but they would have a hard time with it. One of my professors, the great Milton Teichman was hugely opposed to it. Then he would tell us this in class, but he was such a good professor, he'd then go back to his subject and that, well, okay. That was enough at a protest now, back when I was supposed to teach it, but he was, he was very much against it and I suspect some of the other guys were too.

John Ansley (00:43:20):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:43:20):

Because it did cause students to be late, it caused students clearly to be distracted and it was finite. And at the end of five days, fine, it was over, you got through it, but there were people who truly you know, both had a great time with it and an awful time with it. I was just glad to get there. I suppose it was like basic training in the service you glad to get through it.

John Ansley (00:43:47):

It's Gotta be done. Yeah. Oh, how many students were in your class? Do you remember?

Stephen Johnson (00:43:56):

I don't I'm guessing it's even with the night students, it's probably below 300.

John Ansley (00:44:03):

Yeah. So yeah that sounds about right, yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:44:09):

250 maybe, it was not big. We had, we had a fair amount of breakage, uin the first year. Yeah. I remember, it was a little like the movie patent. And I forgot whether it was in Leo or in the gym. I was told it was Leo, but the brother brought us in there whose name I've forgotten. He basically said, look to your left, look to your right, that man won't be here in six months. And in some cases he was right. On cases, he was very right. But the, and then of course we, at that time, all of us on campus were subject to the draft. Okay. You were on campus, not as 4F but I forgot the exact classification, but there was a draft classification and she got a deferment for that.

John Ansley (00:45:00):

Right.

Stephen Johnson (00:45:01):

And if your GPA fell below, it may have been something like below one nine, you could be 1A and called up.

John Ansley (00:45:10):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:45:11):

And it was black humor. You know, more than one conversation revolved around, Oh, you flunked that test and you're in a rice Patty tomorrow, but it was half true.

John Ansley (00:45:20):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:45:21):

A lot of guys, who left were subsequently called up.

John Ansley (00:45:28):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:45:29):

And you had to keep an eye on your grades because once you lost that deferment, it was not easy to get back. And all four years, I mean our class 69, we were subject to the draft all the way through. And that preceded the lottery. Of course it was simply predicated upon grades and keeping yourself out of 1A because once you were 1A, you were, you were fair game.

John Ansley (00:45:56):

Wow. Yeah. So that's interesting.

Stephen Johnson (00:45:59):

Yeah. And this crew today of course, does not have to live with it. It's an interesting thing. If selective service was brought back, think about this in our day. It was males only. Well, since we are a fair Galatariian society today, women would have to be drafted. And that would put a whole new spin on it. And there are women serving very well in the military today.

John Ansley (00:46:23):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:46:24):

But I don't think they would enjoy being drafted any more than the men would enjoy being drafted.

John Ansley (00:46:30):

No, I imagine not.

Stephen Johnson (00:46:31):

So that was a big concern. That's something that classes today do not live with.

John Ansley (00:46:36):

Yeah. Yeah, no, that's a very important part of what your whole college experience, did you have friends that left to go into the military or that were drafted?

Stephen Johnson (00:46:47):

Yeah. A good number of guys who graduated with the class were lined up for the military Marines Navy primarily, a couple of guys for the army. But yeah, there was a lot of guys here who then subsequently knew career wise. They were going into the service when they left.

John Ansley (00:47:08):

Did ROTC have a big presence on campus?

Stephen Johnson (00:47:10):

Not that I can recall.

John Ansley (00:47:12):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:47:12):

And in fact, I would say there was not.

John Ansley (00:47:14):

Really interesting.

Stephen Johnson (00:47:15):

Say there was not, I do not recall a ROTC presence at all. I can recall once on quote unquote career day, the military was here and may have been the army, but I have no recollection of a subsequent appearance. And absolutely no recollection of, of anyone I knew being in ROTC Now I wasn't aware of a lot of things half the time, but maybe I missed it, but I don't think there was.

John Ansley (00:47:45):

Okay. Yeah. That's interesting. So tell me what a typical day was like for you. Cause I think there's big differences between them today.

Stephen Johnson (00:47:59):

The earliest classes I can recall having started at eight. Okay. My classes were divided amongst three places, Donnelly primarily. Okay. What I still call Champangnet secondarily the opposite, the area opposite the theater in the Murray student center, which I think is still used as classrooms today. We had classrooms in there.

John Ansley (00:48:25):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:48:26):

And then on a tertiary basis the old Adrian hall, which existed between the gym and Donnelly. Okay. Not there today. There were a couple of lectures in there, but the overwhelming majority of my classes, certainly language, the science classes I took and I was a liberal arts and just about all my history was in Donnelly. So the day earliest class would be at eight, classes ran about 90 minutes. I tried to get it so I wouldn't have, if I could avoid it, two classes back to back. But as I recall, I would have two classes in the morning, break for lunch, class after lunch, somewhere around 2:00 to 3:30, then I would use like 4:00 to 6:00 to go to a library and study. So I think I had three, possibly four classes during the day. But then at night when I had the mandatory French courses, I had to spend time in the French lab at night, recording French, well, responses or French homework, but we had a tape recorder. You had to work off a tape recorder and that was murder. Just murder. And I can remember classes in Donnelly that were held when I had a brother Desilets for physics classes were held in the central amphitheater, which I thought was neat. I actually, I don't think I knew that was there until my second year, but, and I didn't have the physics class until my last year. And in fact my geology class, or what do they call earth science with Vince Kotschar, I think was also in there. So primarily my recollection of classwork was in Donnelly.

John Ansley (00:50:29):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:50:29):

It pretty much a hundred percent, little bit in my, in my fourth year, all my philosophy classes were in Champagnat. And then I had, we had in those days, mandatory theology classes. And theology, my theology lectures were absolutely in the old Adrian.

John Ansley (00:50:47):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:50:47):

We had a brother named brother, a big Mike Shurkus. He was a great guy. He might've been a linebacker for the Chicago Bears. I don't know. But he was very, very interesting. And I can remember we had Gym, of course, in those days you had to take gym. You have to hustle from Gym, where you've been worked to death. And then you'd sit into a big warm, comfortable leather seat, which is what Adrian had. And then trying to listen to a theology lecture. You can't do it. Ripley wouldn't believe it. You couldn't stay awake. It was just too much. But the days were fairly well structured. I don't think I had any days where I did not have classes as I spent more time here. I understood how to judiciously lay out my schedule. So it was more in my favor. I know by my senior year I had nothing in the afternoon. Just nothing I would, front-load everything, four days a week. And then Fridays, basically I was gone. And perhaps they can do that today. I don't know. But my schedule was very convenient. It allowed me to do the work I had to do both on hours and off hours, access to the professors if I needed them and then access to the library, which in those days pre-internet you actually had to go into a physical device called the book and read it. It was very analog. It was a different experience. And you put marks on paper, this is called, I'm holding up. This is a pen or pencil. You had to put marks on paper and take notes. It was different.

John Ansley (00:52:29):

Yeah. Yeah. Oh yeah. Very different. And you'd mentioned that when you were a freshman, your RA or Proctor would make sure you were at your desk at eight o'clock. So was that every day of the week?

Stephen Johnson (00:52:41):

Every day of the week for the first half, presumably first semester, you had to be there at your desk from eight until I think it was 10 o'clock.

John Ansley (00:52:51):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:52:52):

And your door open.

John Ansley (00:52:53):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:52:55):

You would probably have youngsters today complaining to their parents about this.

John Ansley (00:53:01):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:53:01):

And the other cool thing was, and I think it, it may still be done here. When you arrived you had to be able to demonstrate that you had a command to the written language. You actually had to produce a product. And based on the production of that written product, you were either put into a remedial class that you had to run through for the semester or you escaped. I was fortunate. I escaped, I did not have to do that, but that was one more burden upon arriving that you had to produce a, composition on something. And if you were graded as passed what we do, if your grade is not passed, One more rock around your neck for your first semester. So you could, and I'm not sure if you could write that composition or do that work when you were studying at your desk and back in Leo at eight o'clock at night. But if you didn't, Oh, well it's something else would keep you busy.

John Ansley (00:54:02):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:54:03):

Cause I remember we used to get a lot of homework then. I mean, there was, there was a lot of stuff given over the years, it backed off. But in my first year we had a lot to do, but most of us who came from a similar academic background, primarily Catholic school, were used to the homework load. Didn't like it. And you'd look to cut corners anyway you could, but it was not a novelty.

John Ansley (00:54:28):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:54:29):

You knew you had to do something Monday night and deliver it Tuesday morning. We all had typewriters. I had an old Royal and the criticism I used to get from one of my professors, the late great Jerry White was at least changed the ribbon, Mr. Johnson.

John Ansley (00:54:48):

Yeah. That's something very different, you know, very, you know, no,

Stephen Johnson (00:54:52):

There's no word process

John Ansley (00:54:54):

You know, stream of consciousness was not something that you're really gonna do with a typewriter.

Stephen Johnson (00:54:58):

I mean, the structure for me was pads and pads of paper in the library, books and books, magazines, read, read, take notes, put stuff together, put it on a piece of paper, try to make a draft out of it and then sit down and type it up because I have recollection of absolutely no professor who would accept a document, not typed for the simple reason that most people's penmanship, mine included. I mean, it was so bad. You couldn't get into pharmaceutical school. It wasn't horrible. So you had to have your typewriter and you learned to change your ribbon, except me. I think I may have used the same ribbon for all four years.

John Ansley (00:55:45):

Did you have a roommate for your dorm room?

Stephen Johnson (00:55:49):

Yeah. Yeah. Leo in those days you had a roommate, each had one side of the room.

John Ansley (00:55:55):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:55:55):

Champangnet had the same thing. I'm not aware of anyone unless their roommate dropped out who was single room.

John Ansley (00:56:04):

Okay. Yeah. So, but I think that maybe the way it is in Leo today, I think they, have roommates I think.

Stephen Johnson (00:56:11):

I know at one point Leo was stacking them like chord where they put three in a room.

John Ansley (00:56:16):

That must've been

Stephen Johnson (00:56:17):

A murder.

John Ansley (00:56:18):

Terrible. Yeah. The dorms on the North end. It's yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:56:24):

My side of, we face South down the river so I could see the bridges.

John Ansley (00:56:29):

Wow. That must have been nice to have.

Stephen Johnson (00:56:31):

Oh, it was great. At one point in the afternoon, the sun was just excoriatingly hot, but it was nice.

John Ansley (00:56:37):

We had housekeepers in those days, who would tidy up your room?

John Ansley (00:56:40):

Oh really? Oh, wow.

Stephen Johnson (00:56:42):

I think they made the beds, but I'm not entirely sure that's accurate, but they would at least empty the waste basket and dust around. And I don't remember them after my second year. I don't know what became of them, but I thought that was an awfully nice touch.

John Ansley (00:56:57):

Yeah, and it must have been quite nice. So were the rooms pretty standard? Just bed desk, little closet?

Stephen Johnson (00:57:03):

Yep. Yeah. You walked in and bed on the left bed on the right desks against the wall. And this was true of Champagnat as it was of Leo. Presumably Sheahan was the same. I didn't actually step foot in Sheahan until my last year, but I can speak for Leo and Champagnat. And then you had a shared closet and then you had a shared pullout drawer. So I think there may have been four drawers, so you'd have two, and the other guy would have two on the bottom.

John Ansley (00:57:34):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:57:34):

It was tight living, but it was fine.

John Ansley (00:57:36):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:57:38):

It was great. And you had your bulletin board so you could stick stuff up.

John Ansley (00:57:43):

Was that the main way to communicate?

Stephen Johnson (00:57:45):

Well, is the way that I know guys would put up, you know, two things will go up any poster you could find be a WC fields or Marilyn Monroe or Humphrey Bogart. Those big black on white posters would go up, but then guys would pin their class schedule to what, or you'd stick papers up. Did you have the right? Or if you got a note from a girlfriend, you might stick that up. If it was in a goodbye letter, throw darts at it. Some guys had nothing up, some guys had it completely covered and decorated.

John Ansley (00:58:21):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (00:58:21):

It's just, to me it was a good place to park stuff. So it was, you know, readily visible.

John Ansley (00:58:26):

So in, in the pre-internet email, social media days how did you communicate with your you know, if you needed to communicate with the roommate or somebody you're working on a project with, in a class or even your professors. So what was the main form?

Stephen Johnson (00:58:45):

Very good question. It was basically knock on the door. I can give you a scenario that answers the question. In my first year I had to take math and it was a, it was an algebra course, which today probably a third grader would take, but it was, it was beyond my academic prowess. And we became five of us in this class. Like the characters in the John Houseman film on TV, the paper chase, there were five of us who had the academic mathematical maturity of a gnat, could not grasp it. So we banded together as a group. And our communication was literally go looking for the guy or the guys, but we agreed. And we would agree in class that we would meet in the old study halls, the outside of Champagnat, which are student rooms today, they were open study halls.

John Ansley (00:59:47):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (00:59:48):

There was a desk and four or five chairs on a white board in there. So your communication was literally you'd walk and find somebody or you open the window and yell at them. There was a primitive mail system across campus, but it was largely as I recall, mail that you would send or was sent to you by the administrative types who were sending you information on a class or sending you information on, you know, your parents have got to send the tuition or something like that. But between and amongst the

students, it was literally just across the table. And so in that fashion, these four or five guys in my math class, we just agreed. We knew the least let's meet and work. And we did. I mean, for the entire year they had math, I've got together, shoot. It was probably struck me as a Wednesday or a Thursday night, but we, we met and we just drilled each other on how to do this stuff. I got the best marks I ever got. And if I came across any of those guys today, I wouldn't know any of them, but for that moment and they were good. I am however thankful for that session, not for my mathematics achievement, but because that session made it possible for me to see the only UFO I've ever seen. And it was great. This is March of 1966, picture this, the setting opens on Champagnat. We are probably on the sixth or seventh floor of champagnat in the study hall that faced due West that is over the Hudson. So therefore we were over the tree line. Our little study class worked off hours working almost through the night. It was not unheard of, but on this particular date in March of 1966, and I will never forget it. We were at a table similar to this. As I'm sitting opposite you, the river was behind me. It is pitch black, and I forgot whatever mathematical problem it was we were solving at the time. But I just stood up to take a break. As a stood up and turned around and look out the window for no idle reason. The entire Hudson Valley explodes in this lurid, pinkish white light. It is so bright that, you know, I can see individual trees across the Hudson.

John Ansley (01:02:41):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (01:02:42):

And before I could say anything, the source of the light in my mind went right up the river level with my line of view. And I snap my head to look North and the direction of Albany to see whatever this thing was vanish over the horizon. I was not the only person in Poughkeepsie to see it. The air force replied that it was quote a suitcase sized hunk of meteorite. Thanks to this mathematics class, it was definitely a UFO cause it was there and gone.

John Ansley (01:03:22):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (01:03:23):

These other guys didn't see it, but other people did. March of 66.

John Ansley (01:03:28):

So that's something else I would search for in the Circle to see if there's, there's gotta be a story about that in there too.

Stephen Johnson (01:03:33):

I don't know if there was cause this camper didn't write it. But that was before the internet. We, you know, we would, we would bump into one another during the day we would confirm it was like, bees, you confirm that you're going to meet, confirm that you had whatever problem it was that we were working on because we worked off whatever the teacher professor was teaching. Okay, it's going to be this. So let's work on that tonight. And I nail it. I got the best math grades I ever got.

John Ansley (01:04:07):

Oh, that's great.

Stephen Johnson (01:04:09):

Joined at the hips. It was brutal.

John Ansley (01:04:11):

I think I'll tell my daughter that people used to have face to face communication. She's 14.

Stephen Johnson (01:04:19):

She's 14, face to face yeah. Yeah, we just, we just did it just said let's get together. As simple as that. It was just a working group.

John Ansley (01:04:25):

Okay. Well that's great.

Stephen Johnson (01:04:27):

It's a lot of fun.

John Ansley (01:04:28):

Yeah. Yeah. What, is there a, a dress code expected for class?

Stephen Johnson (01:04:32):

Yeah. As I recall, definitely in the first year you had to wear a jacket and tie and I don't think I could wear jeans.

John Ansley (01:04:38):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (01:04:39):

Second year was the same. Although I have a sense in the second half of the second year, that broke down to the extent that perhaps jeans were allowed. I think one would have to look at pictures in those days, but I think the pictures would verify the jacket and tie was required. Third year I wasn't here. I was abroad in London. Fourth year, You went wherever you wanted to go. So presumably at the start of the third year, it may have been entirely done away with, but initially first year you had to be fairly well trimmed out.

John Ansley (01:05:16):

Was that expected just all day or just in class?

Stephen Johnson (01:05:20):

Had it been just in class? I don't, I don't recall having to wear a tie to go to breakfast, lunch or dinner.

John Ansley (01:05:27):

Okay. What were the dining halls like or dining hall?

Stephen Johnson (01:05:31):

Oh, it was nice. The same footprint as today. Nowhere near as big. There is what you all today call Hogwarts was an open atrium in our day, which I suspect you may remember.

John Ansley (01:05:53):

I do. Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:05:54):

And there was a hall behind it where the circle used to be published from, and that wrapped around behind the cafeteria. The food was nothing to write home about, but you know I didn't know, bad cooking up from down. I happen to like it and it wasn't bad. I mean you got all you could eat. There were a few foods, there were some brilliant food flights, Lord.

John Ansley (01:06:26):

So did all classes eat together? It didn't matter?

Stephen Johnson (01:06:31):

All classes together. I, there were a lot of guys who work back there would take part time jobs behind there. There were, God, the jello was notorious.

John Ansley (01:06:41):

For food fights or just,

Stephen Johnson (01:06:43):

Well, it gave us a good missile, but the jello would be spike. Cause you could smoke in those days. Guys would stub cigarettes out in the jello, so it wouldn't be recycled. We used that phrase, freezer, scraping sessions. I thought breakfast in order of a palatability, breakfast was good. Cause you could get all the cold cereal you wanted and juice. And the eggs were, if you've been in the service, you'd recognize the eggs. They were questionable. Lunch was okay because you had a sandwich bar and you, you basically made your own sandwich and there'd be some hot meals. I remember I thought it was a particularly tasty chop suey recipe with probably no more chop suey than can filter fish, but I thought it was fairly tasty. And then dinner, dinner was not great. Dinner, you'd work your way around. I can remember the hamburgers, at some point latter in the first year or perhaps second year, the school changed over to a food service provider called saga. And they went onto their way to do, I thought a very decent job, both in presentation, quality and then subsequently in quantity. And they were the ones who introduced, which was a huge hit the Saturday night steak fry. They had, It hadn't been outside of the rat scholar, but they had grills outside and they would cook steaks. And if, if the listeners are familiar with the late lamented, Tad's steakhouses in Manhattan, it was notch above gristle, but it was not horrible. It was decent. So I thought the food was okay. There were no outposts on campus to eat other than a few vending machines to get a bag of potato chips.

John Ansley (01:08:34):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (01:08:34):

Where people would ostensibly go to eat first and foremost was a now long gone diner on route nine. It would have been located South of what is known today as the steel plant and opposite Donnelly. And it was called the College Diner. It was not the Marist Diner. It was the College Diner was a very old diner and half the guys who went there, stiff the guy for the meal and bolted out the window. And that was about the only place you could go. Frank's Bar didn't serve food, I don't think other than beef jerky and no one ate at the Derby. So you had to eat on campus. There really, really wasn't much choice.

John Ansley (01:09:19):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (01:09:20):

There were, if you had access to a car, you could drive down the South road. There were some hamburger outlets, and I used the term outlet cause I have no recollection of they being a chain. I remember being down there and getting something, but you, you ate on campus. There just was nothing else. That's, you know, nobody died as far as I know.

John Ansley (01:09:48):

What was your major?

Stephen Johnson (01:09:51):

I was History Major history.

John Ansley (01:09:51):

History Major.

Stephen Johnson (01:09:52):

Yep.

John Ansley (01:09:52):

Great.

Stephen Johnson (01:09:53):

Yeah. Purportedly medieval history, but I took every class I could cause I enjoyed it. I liked my professors. I liked, Jerry White was terrific for medieval history. George Skau for modern history, particularly world war II. Um never actually took classes with, was it Roscoe Balch had never had one of his classes. There was somebody else I didn't have either, but, those two gentlemen, Jerry White and uh, George Scott, you' enjoyed their classes a lot.

John Ansley (01:10:30):

And did you have a minor?

Stephen Johnson (01:10:32):

If I did. I don't know if I ever actually declared it.

John Ansley (01:10:36):

And were there other professors that you have strong memories of?

Stephen Johnson (01:10:46):

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Bob Lewis. I had him for a, I believe theology. Vince Kotschar for earth science. There was a guy named Bill o'Keefe. I had initially for psychology. He was very good. Was that Ed O'Keefe? It might have been, he was ostensibly about an hour older than we were. He looked as young as we did. He was good. Brother Lord, Brother Desilets that's for physics, right? He was, he was terrific. I had my first year for French former West point Colonel Edward Germann for French. He was tough. He was tough. Then I remember I had a I forgot her name. Last name was O'Connell my last year for French. I had a gap between when I settled it out. Milton Teichman I thought was terrific.

John Ansley (01:11:48):

Yeah,

Stephen Johnson (01:11:48):

Great instructor. There were lots of other ones, regrettably, the names don't pop into view, but they, they were all terrific, really dedicated teachers. The ones that I had, you know, very informative, very open. You could always talk to them. They were always readily accessible because it meant you actually had to go across campus and knock on their door instead of sending them an email. You got to know them a little bit.

John Ansley (01:12:15):

Yeah, that's true. You probably did get to know them a little better than the students would today. Did you have, so you had required theology, were there other elements.

Stephen Johnson (01:12:28):

And the, the, the liberal core when we started off required X hours of theology, X hours of math, X hours of language.

John Ansley (01:12:38):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:12:39):

X, hours of science at some point in your four years. It, and it was, it was bonehead physics or bonehead chemistry.

John Ansley (01:12:47):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:12:47):

But you had to take those.

John Ansley (01:12:49):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (01:12:49):

And then your quote, unquote core stuff, be it history or be it economics. But the liberal curriculum required those blocks to be ticked off as you went through.

John Ansley (01:13:04):

Okay. And did you do you remember how many credit hours you would take in a semester? Was it like 12, 15, something like that?

Stephen Johnson (01:13:11):

I don't.

John Ansley (01:13:12):

Or how many courses you'd taken a semester? I guess it varies now, but you know, its three or four, something like that.

Stephen Johnson (01:13:18):

I, I, I'm going to guess a three or four, possibly five.

John Ansley (01:13:22):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:13:24):

I remember being heavily loaded my first year, particularly the first half of the first year.

John Ansley (01:13:28):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:13:30):

And then completely slacking off my last year, but I remember the first and second year I was heavily loaded.

John Ansley (01:13:39):

It sounds like it was quite rigorous and starting out, especially.

Stephen Johnson (01:13:42):

I believe it was, I believe it was, but I didn't know any different because to me, in a sense it was like accelerated high school. You know, you were expected to be at your desk from eight to three and then do your homework, maybe grab dinner and then go back and finish your homework. You know, that's what you were there to do as, you know, naively viewed in that fashion. And it suited me well.

John Ansley (01:14:10):

Did you have any time for extracurricular activities?

Stephen Johnson (01:14:13):

Oh, I suppose so. Yeah. I think my biggest one in my second, my fourth year I was on radio w MCR, whatever it was called, the radio station before it hunkered itself down in Lowell Thomas was in champagnat. It was in one of those study halls. I mentioned earlier on the South side of champagnat that faced Leo and the studio was composed of a mixing board or rather just a couple of turntables and a control board, little set of headphones. And for the acoustics, the wall opposite, the disc jockey was covered in old egg cartons. And we had a view of Leo and when I would go on, and I, my show would go on at seven 30 at night. And I played records primarily, I would say, okay, who is listening in Leo blink your lights. Let's see a couple of lights blink. And I go on the radio was on, we weren't, I don't think we broadcasted on an antenna. I think we broadcasted, somebody sat on a wire on campus.

John Ansley (01:15:30):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (01:15:30):

But somebody also said that our signal did bleed off campus. I never knew that to be true, but we'd play records. And I did that in my fourth year. And then, you know, I think I kept myself reasonably busy that had, you know, less than no interest in sports. So I didn't do sports, but I did some social action stuff. You know, I remember being in some more than one occasion, protesting various things so that, that occupied some time. And then, you know, we would go down to the river and you have a beer or two down there and watch anything float by that might have been floating by.

John Ansley (01:16:10):

Was it a politically active campus when you're here?

Stephen Johnson (01:16:13):

Yeah. You know, it was, it was very politically active and it was at, being Vietnam and being also the, the high end, the apex of the civil rights era, it was a charged campus. We had a variety of speakers in the theater come up on, on both sides of the equation. The Berrigan brothers were here. They were Jesuits who were hugely anti-war active in the sixties. The Berrigans were here. Is he god I forgot his name. He owned the the village folklore center is, ah, Young. Israel Young was up here. He was a rabid pro Cuban guy.

John Ansley (01:16:55):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:16:55):

But setting that aside, he was also massively entertaining cause he owned the village folklore center and he was one of the guys who put Dylan up when Dylan first hit the village back in 62. So we had interesting stories. We had a lot of speakers come in, focused on civic and social responsibility guys who would come in and talk about a Catholic active Catholic worker, Catholic action, Catholic action folks were here and it just went on and there were also entertainers. I mean, I played in the theater a bunch of times.

John Ansley (01:17:33):

Oh, that's great.

Stephen Johnson (01:17:34):

Uh no, it wasn't great, but I had a good time.

John Ansley (01:17:39):

So you brought your guitar with you?

Stephen Johnson (01:17:40):

And in those days, yeah. Yeah, yeah. And the theater always had something going, being, being, you know, a legitimate play or a speaker with a topic that half the campus would light the torches and March on the castle for and the other half would be listening to them. So it was, it was always something good. And I think some of the old yearbooks actually have, if not listings, they've got photographs of some of these events.

John Ansley (01:18:09):

And was the faculty supportive of the events?

Stephen Johnson (01:18:12):

Oh, you know, you know, you know, I suspect the faculty in those days was probably predominantly antiwar.

John Ansley (01:18:21):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:18:24):

And, and I can recall a couple of guys, a couple of professors, names escape me now, you know, at least sitting in on these lectures. Yeah. So there, there was political activity on campus.

John Ansley (01:18:36):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (01:18:37):

There was absolutely political activity on campus.

John Ansley (01:18:39):

Who was President while you were here?

Stephen Johnson (01:18:45):

Richard, Dennis, his predecessor

John Ansley (01:18:47):

Richard Foy.

Stephen Johnson (01:18:49):

Richard Foy.

John Ansley (01:18:49):

Yeah. Was he, was a brother at the time. Was, do you know whether he was supportive of the political activity on campus?

Stephen Johnson (01:19:01):

I think he viewed the campus as a place where all political views should be heard and ergo would have been supportive. There was nothing on my time on campus that represented anything from the administration that said, no, we can't have this. We can't have, that's not politically correct nothing.

John Ansley (01:19:21):

That's great.

Stephen Johnson (01:19:22):

Nothing. It was, it was wide open, but we were a much smaller audience, right. That weren't that many folks here, but I have no sense that the administration was anything short of supportive of all views. Okay. Well, they may have had their own personal views. I think the administration view was a major charter of college and university is to get to the truth. You don't get to the truth by suppressing speech.

John Ansley (01:19:51):

That's great.

Stephen Johnson (01:19:51):

And I believe that's true here today.

John Ansley (01:19:54):

Yeah, I think so. I hope so.

Stephen Johnson (01:19:57):

Fingers crossed.

John Ansley (01:20:00):

So you mentioned that there were brothers on campus when you were here, did you have a lot of interaction with them?

Stephen Johnson (01:20:06):

No, very limited actually some of the brothers, well, they all took classes of course. And they would be in there presumably novitiate garb. And I was acquainted with several of them in the first year, but then in 66 they just seem to begin to bail out in droves and move into the general population. And I don't recall any in my fourth year, I do recall them putting on a really good concert musical concert in the second year.

John Ansley (01:20:41):

And there was a very talented guys and they were visible on campus. I don't think they ate with us, very certain. They didn't eat with us. I think they had their own eating facilities in Fontaine. And they didn't participate in campus activities to the extent that, you know, they weren't football games, they weren't out doing, well, I'm not sure what we were doing in those days, but I don't recall seeing them outside of general classes.

John Ansley (01:21:21):

Okay. Was the chapel attached to the old Fontaine?

Stephen Johnson (01:21:26):

As I recall? Yeah.

John Ansley (01:21:27):

So that was really largely used by the brothers. Was mass required for students?

Stephen Johnson (01:21:34):

No, it was always open. It was well attended. The, best attended mass was the one Sunday afternoon around five o'clock. Cause there were a couple in the mornings on Sundays. Well, there may have been one on Saturday, but the one that drew the biggest crowd was Sunday afternoon, late. That would generally have as close to a full house as you could get in there. We had mandatory retreat in our first year. I think it was in late January, early February of my first year. So that would have been into 66.

John Ansley (01:22:07):

What was that like?

Stephen Johnson (01:22:08):

What was like a two day retreat somehow was done on campus? A lot of it took place in the chapel. Some of it took place in classrooms, but it was a lot of maneuvering, you know, this whole class around to this event. And, you know, guys are at that point, well, I don't want to do this, but the overwhelming majority of guys did it. We never did it again. I don't remember that after that one instance.

John Ansley (01:22:35):

Oh, interesting.

Stephen Johnson (01:22:36):

Yeah. I don't think maybe the guys who were behind us, it would have been the class of 1970 had to go through it, but I paid no attention to it if it was done, but it was demonstrably a far more religious campus. You know, the brothers were very much in evidence, you know, they weren't in civvies. They were in, you know, in their vestments, the robes and the place was identified clearly as a Catholic college.

John Ansley (01:23:03):

And some of your professors brothers, right?

Stephen Johnson (01:23:06):

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. They were.

John Ansley (01:23:10):

Let's see. So when you started, it was all male.

Stephen Johnson (01:23:13):

Oh Yeah.

John Ansley (01:23:14):

When did women started coming to campus?

Stephen Johnson (01:23:16):

My recollection September 68.

John Ansley (01:23:20):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:23:20):

That was my recollection.

John Ansley (01:23:21):

Was that just evening division?

Stephen Johnson (01:23:24):

There were a few gals who were a part of the general population during the day.

John Ansley (01:23:29):

And were they living on campus in 68 and 69?

Stephen Johnson (01:23:33):

I don't believe so. To my knowledge, there was no accommodation at that time for them in any of the three existing dorms, I had the impression that they were day students, they lived in the immediate area, came onto campus that way.

John Ansley (01:23:50):

What was the general reaction on campus for the men?

Stephen Johnson (01:23:54):

I think it was not enough girls. Yeah.

John Ansley (01:23:59):

Yeah. And you'd mentioned prior to that, you know, you'd have social events and women would come from local colleges. So that was how regular was that?

Stephen Johnson (01:24:08):

I recall them being every Friday night, they would go off at about eight o'clock and the buses would arrive on campus about seven 30. The buses I remember most came up from the old lady cliff, which is adjacent to West point. Lady Cliff today, I don't believe it's still around. Mount St. Mary's would send a bus up.

John Ansley (01:24:27):

Was that all women?

Stephen Johnson (01:24:28):

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Yep. I think buses came from Bard and or Bennett College at the time. None from Vassar, none from Vassar. And somebody said a bus came from New Paltz once, but I had no verification of that in any way, shape or form.

John Ansley (01:24:50):

So that must have been fun. So it was just you know, they'd say, Hey, there's a dance at Marist and they just go up.

Stephen Johnson (01:24:57):

And it's like 25 cents. They get in. And the event had potato chips, pretzels, and there was beer. You could get beer. And beer, I think was like 25 cents a cup or something. Or if you had your Marist beer mug, they'd fill that for you.

John Ansley (01:25:16):

And probably a better deal.

Stephen Johnson (01:25:17):

A better deal. There was some good bands actually.

John Ansley (01:25:20):

Yeah, it sounds like it.

Stephen Johnson (01:25:21):

It was very good band in those days out of Poughkeepsie called the Blue Rondo's and whoever they were, they were fairly tight and they did some very good coverage of songs that were hugely popular at the time. And I was impressed at one mixer when one of their guys got up there solo and covered Paul McCartney's Yesterday, which up until that moment, I said, well, how could anyone else do it? Well, this kid stepped up and did it.

John Ansley (01:25:51):

Wow. What else did you do for fun on campus?

Stephen Johnson (01:25:56):

Oh, Cripe.

New Speaker (01:25:58):

Their sports games that you'd go to? Yeah, I've got occasional football games. I know by fourth year, a lot of guys had cars and we would go off and visit other campuses. So that constituted fun. On campus, not a lot. I, I'd like to say during the normal week, you know, watch TV, if you had some downtime go down to the river and have a few beers. That was always fun, but I don't claim that I had a lot of enough downtime where I could say, Oh, well, I've got hours on my hands. I'll just kick back and relax. I just, I just don't recall it.

John Ansley (01:26:47):

I can imagine it's it seems to be like that today, I think.

Stephen Johnson (01:26:51):

Yeah. That's it. Keep your heads down and stay at what you're supposed to do. Cause in the back of my mind, it was still the draft.

John Ansley (01:26:58):

Yeah, sure.

Stephen Johnson (01:27:00):

Um you mean when I came back in 68 and I said, well, this is it. It's starting the fourth year. And I did not have a remotely clear picture as to what I wanted to do, but since I had been abroad for my third year, I had something vague like, Oh, I like to travel. You know? Well, what that morphed into is I was accepted into the peace Corps in March of 69. And that was my only play if that had fallen out I was up the Creek. Wow. And it got real close to falling out. I didn't know, until years later how close it was.

John Ansley (01:27:40):

Really?]

Stephen Johnson (01:27:40):

Yeah. And those days, of course you received notification by telegram. Someone up my notification was a, it's funny, someone walked over to Champagnat and knocked on my door.

John Ansley (01:27:54):

It was a student and said, you have to go to Donnelley, you have a telegram. So I had to walk back to Donnelley. I opened the telegram and it said you've been accepted in the peace Corps more information to follow. So I said, Oh boy, that's interesting. And then in my last week, early may, now could have been early may had to have been late April, but anyways. The last week as I'm taking exams, got a telegram delivered to my room, got scotch tape at a door. And it said, this is the peace Corps, standby developments. We've had to trim the group down. On this particular day, they specified a day, you were to call this number collect, and you'll be told whether you're in or out and I'm in the middle of exams. And you know, stupidity was great. Cause I had no idea what imminent danger I was in.

John Ansley (01:28:51):

So I went and took my telegram and on the appointed day called up the number and the voice said, look at the telegram in the upper left hand corner, read back the number that's there. So I read back the number that was there. Okay. I can tell you you're accepted. You got to report on so-and-so with so-and-so location and then that was it.

John Ansley (01:29:14):

Wow.

Stephen Johnson (01:29:15):

And I said, Oh, guess I'm in, that's it? I mean, the canoe was right on the edge of the falls.

John Ansley (01:29:25):

Adding a little stress to finals week there. Jeez. So you mentioned going abroad that sounded like it must have been great. Was that for a semester or a full year?

Stephen Johnson (01:29:38):

Full year that in those days was called third year abroad. I think it's Dublin Marist abroad or something. Yeah. Yeah. And once again, it was one of those many things on campus. I had no clue of, but a friend of mine was clued into it even as early as our first year, few months in. And he said, you know, the school will send you over to somewhere to study. And I said, well, that's nice. But in the second year it accelerated and he was really focused on this. So we said, you should interview. I said well, who do you have to contact? So I did. And the contact was Joel Belanger. Yeah. So I contacted them. I said, well, I sure liked to do that. So I had to have an interview and I sat down with Joe and three other people, presumably professors, I didn't know up from down, I sat with these guys talked and then thank them. And I left. And then probably a week later I get a, an intra campus mail saying, congratulations, I've been accepted into the third year abroad program.

John Ansley (01:30:55):

So I called my parents and I said it looks like I'll, I won't be in Poughkeepsie next year. They said what? I said, yeah, I'm going to be studying in London. Wow. As that was the one that they decided I'd be most adept at that.

John Ansley (01:31:10):

Oh, that's great. What college were you at?

Stephen Johnson (01:31:13):

Queen Mary college, which was part of the university of London. Today it's actually queen Mary university. And it alone is bigger than the university of London.

John Ansley (01:31:23):

Really?

Stephen Johnson (01:31:25):

Joe had a contact there named Bindoff, Professor Bindoff. To this day. I don't know how he made the contact, but he arranged as he had done at schools throughout Europe. But he arranged for a stream of Marist students to go there. As over, it was either build as overseas students or occasional students. Occasional is probably not inaccurate, but we were enrolled and the cost of enrollment was a fraction of what it was here.

John Ansley (01:31:57):

Really.

Stephen Johnson (01:31:58):

Yeah. And the cost because the Sterling dollar ratio in those days was so good. I mean the dollar went miles in the UK in those days. And so it really was cost effective in some sense to be there. But it was, it was two semesters. We took a boat over there, nine days at sea, and the boat was the SS Orelia that left from a pier at the foot of 42nd street. We were nine days to Southampton, England. And for the rest of the campers, it was another day and a half to Cherbourg, on the coast of France. We were dumped off in South Hampton. I mean, beyond clueless, beyond I we had no money. Somebody met us. We were as a group taken to a hotel for the night. We went with girls from Mount st. Vincent college.

John Ansley (01:32:59):

Okay.

Stephen Johnson (01:33:00):

I think that was done because the adult in charge, Joe Belanger knew that the student ship, the Orelia, sought to book people in large groups. They knew they had a revenue stream. They could give the group a discount. So we were subsequently told, this is where you report. This is the school you'll be at. One of our classmates Tim Brier went to LSC. Other guys went to a UC university college. Some guys went to Kings and a bunch of us went to queen Mary college, QMC.

John Ansley (01:33:43):

That sounds like a great experience.

Stephen Johnson (01:33:45):

Oh it was wonderful. Well, London, 1967 and Beatles had just released Sergeant pepper. It was just, that was fabulous. It's just fabulous. And you're able to continue taking your history courses. Oh yeah. I took a, took a ton of history courses. I mean, I had a lecture series with AJP Taylor, who was the famous historian in Britain origins of the first world war, or is it a second world war classes with I didn't have a class with him, but JJ scars brick was at QMC. He had just published at that time, the definitive biography of Henry the eighth. So there were extraordinary professors you had access to and history events. We at QMC went ou at the start of our winter term to a Windsor great park or Windsor castle is for three day history seminar. And we had lectures from the best contemporary, British historians at the time, but it was just sensational. So you, you know, you had all this washing over you as well as, you know, swinging London in 1967 and 68. Oh my Lord. So it was good. Fun.

John Ansley (01:35:01):

Yeah.

Stephen Johnson (01:35:02):

And you learned a lot. Cause I had to send all the papers back here. I ran all my stuff back through Jerry White.

John Ansley (01:35:08):

Did you really?

Stephen Johnson (01:35:08):

Yeah. Everything came back to Jerry, Jerry graded it. And I don't think I was aware of my grades. So I actually got back. Wow. I don't recall getting any documentation. Joe came over to see us in March of 68 and other than, you know, how are y'all doing? And you know, be a be good students. Was all we heard he was, he was a good administrator and left us to our own devices. So we had chances for travel, cultural exchange, you know, I became friends with a lot of folks in Britain, friends that I'm still along with my white friends with today. I'm still see even today, which is terrific. Yeah. That is part of the experience. So that's why my fourth year, so I like to travel. Oh yeah. Great.

John Ansley (01:36:00):

So you finished up at Marist in 1969.

Stephen Johnson (01:36:05):

69, man. They handed me the diploma in may of 69.

John Ansley (01:36:08):

Where was the graduation ceremony?

Stephen Johnson (01:36:11):

On the field where Leonidoff is today? Our crew assembled in a line in front of Donnelly caps and gowns. We marched down to the stage. There was a stage set up with his back to route nine. There was a banner with the Marist logo behind it. Our speaker was a lore. He was a New York state center. I don't think it was federal. He was from upstate New York. Gosh, I forgot his name, but we had great weather. It was done outside. They called us up. I'll be what got your diploma. And then you were done. We had senior week on the run up to it, which was monumental.

John Ansley (01:37:05):

Were there planned events for that or?

Stephen Johnson (01:37:06):

Yeah, we had a lot of, oddly enough, we had a lot of baseball where McCann is today. There were, there were a couple of loose baseball times. We played a lot of softball out there, but at every base was a keg.

John Ansley (01:37:19):

Keg ball.

Stephen Johnson (01:37:19):

So that the, that, that helped the game a lot. And we had we had just a lot of events. I have no idea who organized it, but whatever it was, it was very well organized. And then we graduated and then that was it. We were off.

John Ansley (01:37:35):

In peace Corps right out of Marist?

Stephen Johnson (01:37:37):

Yeah, I reported correct. It must've been the third week of June.

John Ansley (01:37:44):

Wow. Where'd you go initially?

Stephen Johnson (01:37:47):

As a group, we had to assemble at Barnard College up on 116th street in Manhattan, opposite Columbia. Yeah. And we stayed there for five days when we were broken into groups and subgroups. And then we had to go through most of our meds. You had to go through all the, all the shots, medical checkups, all the dental work. And then you were stuck on buses. We were stuck on buses because our group was sent down to Washington DC, summer of 69. Jeez was it hot, unbelievably hot. The remaining crew stayed in New York and then we regrouped and they flew us out, to Ethiopia right at the time of Woodstock. It, I think it was literally as Woodstock was happening, we flew out. And then that was it.

John Ansley (01:38:47):

What did you do after the after that, after being in Ethiopia?

Stephen Johnson (01:38:53):

Well, when I came back I looked around and decided I would tend bar. I tend to borrow a couple of years, know one of my customers was a Xerox sales manager. He gave me his card and said, well, if you can do this, you can tend bar you can sell. And that started my sales career. I joined Xerox probably about four months after that spent 11 years with Xerox. Then in 1984, I joined a new industry telecommunications with MCI telecommunications who actually began competitive telecommunications. And I remained in an industry for 26 years. Wow. Retired out in 2010 with 37 years of sales experience.

John Ansley (01:39:38):

Wow. Yeah, that's a, that's a long career.

Stephen Johnson (01:39:45):

It was a career. Okay. And now I run the New Cannan Men's Club,

John Ansley (01:39:51):

Which is a lot of fun from my experience.

Stephen Johnson (01:39:54):

Yeah. Well folks enjoyed having you down there and I had a great time. I do it again this Friday. That's good.

John Ansley (01:40:02):

That's cool. We haven't this Friday.

Stephen Johnson (01:40:03):

I'm trying. I think we have a former FBI agent coming in.

John Ansley (01:40:07):

Wow. That'd be interesting.

Stephen Johnson (01:40:08):

She is talking about the Kremlin's active efforts to disrupt us elections. She is FBI, or was FBI counterintelligence file. So it should be very good. So I'm going to do my piece and get right off the stage so she can get up and talk all she wants. Yeah.

John Ansley (01:40:28):

That sounds like a great way. That's very cool. Is there anything that I didn't cover that you wanted to mention?

Stephen Johnson (01:40:36):

No, I don't. I don't think so. I'm just quickly racking my brain. No, there's nothing I could add that would significantly change alter or enhance or improve what we have covered so far.

John Ansley (01:40:53):

All right. Well, thanks so much.

Stephen Johnson (01:40:55):

John, Thank you. My pleasure, indeed.

John Ansley (01:40:57):

That was great.

Stephen Johnson (01:40:58):

I hope this helped flesh out the annals.

John Ansley (01:41:00):

Yes, it definitely does. I was fascinated.